

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: BEXP, BU

SUBJECT: SILISTRA AND BURGAS PROJECTS REVIEWED

USDOC FOR BEWT; SECSTATE ALSO FOR EUR/EE

REF: A) SOFIA 1218; B) STATE 129124

1. EMBOFFS CALLED ON NENKO LECHEV, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF RODOPA, ON JUNE 30 TO DISCUSS SCOPE OF SILISTRA AND BURGAS PROJECTS AS WELL AS EPSTEIN PROSPECTS AS FOLLOW-UP TO AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON FIRST DEPMIN FOREIGN TRADE KHRISTOV (SEE REFTEL A). LECHEV WAS QUITE FORTHCOMING IN DESCRIBING PROJECTS, BUT SEVERAL OF HIS STATEMENTS REGARDING BURGAS PROJECT DID NOT AGREE WITH KHRISTOV'S AS REPORTED RETEL A.

2. SILISTRA PROJECT, ACCORDING TO LECHEV, IS COMPLETE, VERTICALLY-INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL PROJECT FOR PRODUCTION OF ALL TYPES OF ANIMAL PRODUCTS AND DAIRY PRODUCTS. HOGS, SHEEP, CATTLE, AND POULTRY ARE TO BE RAISED ON 120 THOUSAND HECTARE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX (AIC) IN SILISTRA DISTRICT ON ONE OF TWO EXISTING AIC'S IN THAT DISTRICT (OTHER IS SOLELY FOR PRODUCTION OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES). PROJECT WOULD INVOLVE GROWTH OF FEEDSTUFF, RAISING OF ANIMALS, AND FINAL PROCESSING AND PACKAGING OF ALL MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTION IN SELF-CONTAINED OPERATION; IN LECHEV'S WORDS: "TO MAKE A SMALL IOWA". FIRMS HAVE BEEN INVITED TO VISIT SILISTRA AIC IN QUESTION, REVIEW OPERATIONS,
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AND SUPPLY PROPOSALS TO MODERNIZE, UPGRADE AND SUPPLEMENT

EXISTING FACILITIES TO STANDARDS DESIRED BY BULGARIANS.
WHOLE PROJECT WILL TAKE PERHAPS FIVE YEARS TO IMPLEMENT.
EMBOFFS HAVE REQUESTED COPY OF SPECIFICATIONS WHICH HAVE
BEEN SUPPLIED PROSPECTIVE BIDDERS ON PROJECT, AND WILL
FORWARD UPON RECEIPT.

3. ACCORDING TO LECHEV (AND IN CONTRADICTION TO KHRISTOV),
BURGAS PROJECT IS MUCH MORE MODEST AS IT INVOLVES ONLY
CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPPING OF PORT PROCESSING PLANT; IT
DOES NOT HAVE VERTICALLY-INTEGRATED FEATURE OF SILISTRA
PROJECT NOR WILL IT HANDLE LINES OTHER THAN PORK. UNLIKE
SILISTRA, TOO, ENTIRE PRODUCTION FROM BURGAS PROJECT IS
INTENDED FOR EXPORT. NONETHELESS, THIS PLANT
WILL BE PART OF AIC RAISING 200-300 THOUSAND SWINE.
TIME PERIOD REQUIRED TO PUT PROJECT INTO OPERATION IS
ROUGHLY TWO YEARS. AGAIN IN CONTRADICTION TO KHRISTOV,
LECHEV STATED THAT DECISION ON THIS PROJECT WAS EXPECTED
BY SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER OF THIS YEAR AND THAT EPSTEIN
(REFTEL B) WOULD BE INVITED TO BULGARIA AGAIN IN NEAR
FUTURE.

4. LECHEV STATED THAT GOB HAS RECEIVED NUMBER OF BIDS
ON BURGAS PROJECT WHICH FROM TECHNICAL RESPECT ARE SOUND.
RODOPA OFFICIALS HAVE VISITED EPSTEIN'S POLISH PROJECT
AND WERE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED, BUT LECHEV ALSO NOTED
EPSTEIN'S PRICE IS SOMEWHAT HIGHER AND BID SOMEWHAT
LATER THAN OTHERS. LECHEV CLOSED BY EXPRESSING STRONG
GOB INTEREST IN EXPORTING TO U.S. AND "JOKINGLY"
REITERATING HOPE EPSTEIN COULD REDUCE PRICE SOMEWHAT.
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